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**12/7/2023**

**10:15 — 10:45 AM ET**

**Fireside Chat with [David Cameron](#)**

**[David Cameron](#), Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Affairs, United Kingdom**

**Moderator: [Jennifer Griffin](#), Chief National Security Correspondent, Fox News**

Jennifer Griffin 00:00

Ladies and gentlemen, it is now my great pleasure to introduce David Cameron. He needs absolutely no introduction. He is the brand new foreign secretary of the United Kingdom but also of course former prime minister, a man who is a staunch ally of the United States and the West, who has seen a lot of the world has seen how the West must stand together on Ukraine and on other issues, and is also wrestled with similar domestic issues than we are dealing with now on immigration, on populism on all sorts of different issues. So without further ado, let me ask to the stage David Cameron. Thank you.

David Cameron 00:52

Thank you it's great to be with you. This morning. About a month ago before I took this job if someone said to me, come to Aspen, it probably meant come for a skiing holiday. Now it means come and speak at a conference but I couldn't be more delighted to be in this job at this time because there are so many difficult issues. That we have to get to grips with. And it made me think the other day about the first job I ever had in politics, which was in 1988 1989. I went to work for Margaret Thatcher. And I just left university and I look back to that time. At that time. The Berlin Wall was falling the Soviet Union was breaking up. Russia was becoming a friend China was joining the WTO and the World Trade Organization. Democracy was spreading across Europe and in many ways across the world. More and more countries. Were adopting market based economics. It wasn't the end of history, but it felt like a time where we were making extraordinary progress. And you contrast that with today and it really couldn't be more different. A war in Europe, a conventional war in Europe, this crisis in the Middle East, a much more aggressive China an unbelievably aggressive Russia, instead of free trade spreading more and more countries adopting protectionism. And I think the first thing to realize in this, in this different world is just how much has changed and how unlikely it is to snap back. Sort of liberally minded conservatives like me have a bit of an optimism bias we always think things are gonna go back to how they were. In fact, I remember a conversation I had with Barack Obama at a G7 And I said, Brad, you know, Britain and America were the two fastest growing economies. We should be so proud of that we're doing such a great job and he said, Yes, David. We are the two best looking horses in the glue factory. I think at the time, I thought, well, you're just a bit gloomy Barack. But now I realize in fact, what he was saying is really the world had changed, things were much more difficult, and we had to recognize that and I think it is really important to do that because at this time, it's never been more important to strengthen our

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defenses to harden and protect our systems to build on our key alliances, to work with our closest friends and allies. And that's why I'm here in the United States today. And I think we should also be frank about something which is our domestic politics is actually making it harder not only to do that, but also to engage in the world in the way that we need to try and build our security and stability that we need. And I heard this on the Hill yesterday over and over again, but I hear it also back at home which is you know, why should we meet these challenges overseas when there are so many challenges at home? And I think we should be frank that there are some things that are fundamentally upended and changed our politics, the pressures that we have from mass movement of people and illegal migration, the fact that globalization hasn't benefited every part of our country equally, there are people in places left behind. And of course, the incredible amplification to these two problems, if you like economic dislocation and social dislocation, the incredible amplification that comes through social media, and I'm not one of those people. Who just says, well just ignore that. And don't think about that just get on and make the arguments for engagement. We have to deal with those problems will only be strong internationally, if we can be strong and prosperous domestically. And that's why I think it doesn't matter whether you're Democrat or Republican, conservative or liberal. We've all got to meet those domestic challenges in order to engage but nonetheless, the arguments for engagement are stronger than ever, and we've got to make them however hard it is. And it's a difficult point to make here but it is true. We are saying our people live all over the world. Businesses trade all over the world. We benefit massively from investing in that engagement to try and deliver the security and the stability that we need. The biggest beneficiary of Pax Americana was America. And it's worth making that argument over and over again. So how do we do it? Well, let's start with the Middle East. I absolutely stand foursquare with you in the United States in recognizing that the attacks on the seventh of October were an appalling terrorist act an invasion of another country. I stood in Kibbutz Barre and saw what had happened to children massacred in front of their parents parents murdered in front of the children. And we're right to support Israel as they try and deal with the Hamas terrorist threat. And people who call for sort of an immediate and permanent ceasefire. Do you need to understand that if you stop now with Hamas still in charge of even a part of Gaza, there can never be a two state solution. So I think it's important we support Israel, while at the same time arguing about the importance of international humanitarian law, the importance of reducing civilian casualties and we will make those points over and over again, but I want to make this point as we look ahead and think about the future and how we try and build a future for Israel and for Palestinian people to live in dignity and justice. The D bit of FCD to the development part is going to be every bit as important, and it's the same in America. We're going to have to try and work out how to build up the Palestinian Authority and revitalize it. We're going to have to work out how to engage the Arab states how to try and rebuild what the Palestinians have and what they need. And to people who say, Well, this development bit it's a rather soft bit of your foreign policy or your security policy. And really the issue is China. I would just make this point that we need to Britain and America and the countries that believe in democracy and freedom. We need to offer other countries an alternative to China. As Larry Summers once said, it's no good if you go to an African country and they say yes it's great. China builds a bridge you just give us a lecture. We that's no good. We've got to offer that alternative. And I think it's really important thing we can work together to

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make sure we're able to put investments into those countries, rather than leave them to the mercy of Chinese debt traps, but crucially what I want to talk about today and why I'm here is Ukraine. I have a very simple and straightforward view about this. Putin's invasion of Ukraine was the worst example of one state invading and wrecking the sovereignty of another state that we have seen since the Second World War and it is a huge challenge to us. I'm not worried about the strength and unity and consensus and bravery of the Ukrainian people. I've been there. I've seen it for myself. I'm worried that we're not going to do what we need to do. Add up the economies of the countries that are on the side of Ukraine. We outmatch Russia by 30 to one in terms of the size of our economies the size of our GDPs we've just got to make that size count. And we've got to make sure we give them the weapons the economic support the moral support the diplomatic support, but crucially, that military support that can make a difference. And I want to just take the few moments I've got in my 10 minutes. I think I've still got a couple left, which is to try and take on some of the arguments that you hear against this engagement. The first thing you hear is it's it's failing. It's not working. I think that is nonsense. You look at what the Ukrainians have done, they have taken back half of the territory that Russia stole Yes, it's a something of a deadlock on land at the moment, but I was standing in the Odessa port just a couple of weeks ago, where the Ukrainians have pushed the Russian Navy back right across the Black Sea. In the process. They've sunk about a fifth of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. They've opened up a maritime way so they can export their goods and grain and over 200 ships. have used that maritime lanes since that amazing work was done. So they are exporting again. They're growing again, their economy is succeeding again. And we should be backing them on that basis. Now the second thing you hear is your is Europe putting its weight. Isn't this all the US and are we doing enough? Well, you are doing an incredible job, the weapons you supply the economic support you give, but the figures now show that actually European countries are doing if you add up, the economic support and the military support, are doing twice as much as the United States so the support really is there. And if you vote through this package, however you do it and whatever you have to connect it with Congress, it will give an enormous fillip to those European countries. But the other thing I'd say is, yes, in the past, sometimes Europe has been rather disunited, but I was at the NATO conference in Brussels a couple of weeks ago. And I've never seen NATO. So united, so engaged, and with Finland and Sweden joining, actually growing and succeeding, that is already a massive failure for Putin that he's managed to bring about that unity. Now, the next thing you hear is well, is the strategy clear enough? Do we know what we're trying to do? Yes, we're trying to help the Ukrainians through what is going to be a difficult winter, and we want to supply them so they can rebuild next year and sustain what they're doing. Why is that so important? Anything less than that is a victory for Putin. And if there is a victory for Putin, it won't be the end of this. I stood in Tbilisi, Georgia in 2008, when he took the part of that country and warned this would happen. And now it's happened in Ukraine. And if we let it win in Ukraine, it will be somewhere else next, and it won't just be American money. That's a risk. It might be a NATO country, so it could be American lives. The value for money, of what you have put in is astounding. What is it? Like maybe 10% of your defense budget used by the Ukrainians has destroyed half of Russia's pre war military assets. Now if that isn't a good investment, I don't know what is. I think the final point that people raises, what about Ukraine? Is it corrupt? Should we be helping this country? Of course Ukraine isn't perfect,

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but it is a democracy. It's a democracy that voted in a referendum. Every part of that country Crimea included Donbass included, to be an independent, sovereign country. It is a democracy. It has a remarkable president in President Solinsky. And it's passing laws that are tougher on corruption than anything that exists in your country or in my country. So I see it as the great test for our generation, the great challenge for our generation. Are we going to defend this democracy and are we going to recognize that European security is also American security, and we should stay united on this? We should pass this money to the Ukrainians, we should back them and make sure that it's Putin that loses because if that money doesn't get voted through, there are only two people that will be smiling. One of them is Vladimir Putin in Russia. The other one is Sieging Ping in Beijing. And I don't know about you, but I want to I don't want to give either of those. People a Christmas present. Thank you very much.

Jennifer Griffin 12:21

Well, thank you very much for outlining your views on Ukraine. Why it matters. It's so great to have you here in Washington. You're the first former prime minister I think since 1970, who's been given a ministerial job. So that is significant. Your first trip was to Ukraine, as you mentioned, and you touched on some of the points but tell us more about why you think Ukraine can win. How can Ukraine win because as we've all seen, it is pretty stalemated right now,

David Cameron 12:51

well, I think you've got to look at what they've done. So far. I think Russia has suffered over 300,000 casualties, NATO's got bigger. They haven't been able to sustain the land that they took from from Ukraine. And I think you can see with examples like the Black Sea, just how Ukraine can push back and I think I mean just to give you one example right now, if we are able to give Ukraine more of the long range missiles that the UK has been giving, the US has to bringing Crimea under proper threat. I mean, there is nothing that will drive Russia further back and put Putin more on the backfoot than actually seeing that Crimea, which is legally part of Ukraine is properly under attack from Ukrainian forces. So sometimes you have to be patient. And I think that's one of the problems we have in democracies is we can be impatient. And these things do take time. But I'm absolutely convinced this is worth investing in and the Ukrainians, there is no doubt that they are absolutely committed to recovering the territory and I think that we should be helping them with that.

Jennifer Griffin 14:01

Do you think for NATO and the US in particular that Crimea is a red line and that's why the US has not provided the long range missiles that the UK has provided, it

David Cameron 14:10

certainly shouldn't be a red line because Crimea is part of I mean, you know, there was a bit of an expert on referendums. But there was a referendum in 1999. I thought I'd get it in there just quickly. In 1991, there was a referendum, and every part of Ukraine Donbass, including Crimea included, voted to be part of Ukraine as an independent sovereign state. And I think sometimes people can be in danger sort of falling for Russian propaganda. I mean, I remember in 2014

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when you know, Putin seized Crimea and the Donbass and tried to sort of spread this message of confusion that it was all about what had happened in the mind and the things that were happening, and if it wasn't, it was a straightforward steal of territory. And I think it's been refreshing that this time around, there's been absolute European unity over it. And so it shouldn't be seen as a red line militarily at all. It is part of Ukraine. Now, what happens at the end of this process, that's not for us to say we have to put Ukraine in the very best position that we can and deliver the message to Putin that he is not winning and cannot win. And at that point, then clearly, you know, there'll be different circumstances of life.

Jennifer Griffin 15:27

So you were on the hill, you met with the House Speaker Mike Johnson and other Republicans who have had expressed concerns about how the money is being spent in Ukraine. Do they have a point? Are they they're concerned about corruption? They don't know where the money's going. What were your answers to?

David Cameron 15:43

I think they got you know, there are lots of concerns people express. But my view is there are good answers to all of that. If you take the issue of the money, as I said, it's 10% of the defense budget to have a massive impact on Russia that has now turned into you know, we didn't pick this fight. They have turned into our adversary by what they did in Georgia by what they did in Ukraine. And I'd also make this point that, you know, we're working very hard to not only just supply weapons to Ukrainians, but also to train them. I started this program as prime minister in Britain has now trained 30,000 Ukrainian soldiers. So from everything I can see the weapons that are going to Ukraine, the military support this going into Ukraine is being used very effectively. I mean, that figure of what has happened in the Black Sea. I mean, Ukraine doesn't even really have a navy, but they have managed to sink about a fifth of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Well, that is, you know, sure the Pentagon is excited by the value for money on offer there. I mean, it's, you know, it's a remarkable thing.

Jennifer Griffin 16:43

And just yesterday, the helicopter fleet the Russian helicopter fleet, it was a I believe in us so that took explain what happened

Unknown Speaker 16:52

Well I think in in one night, something like a fifth of Russia's attack helicopters in the in the theater were destroyed and I think that was one of the US attack items, long range artillery and that, again, proves that these weapons make an incredible difference. You know, there are many aspects to this war that do look quite like the First World War, the deep trenches, the frozen lines, the big defensive elements and all of that, but I think what you've seen is where we have, you know, gone further on on weapons and helped they can make an enormous difference and I think you know, Britain I'm proud of the fact that I can say this because it wasn't me it was my predecessors have been ahead of the game. A lot of people concern should we give the Ukrainians anti tank weapons we did give anti tank weapons. That wasn't an escalation.

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It was just quite rightly one ally, giving another ally the right to defend itself. Same argument about tanks. Same argument about long range artillery, same argument about jets. And I think, look, as long as you don't cross the red line of NATO soldiers fighting Russian soldiers. We should be doing everything we can to support a sovereign independent nation to defend itself. And I think Britain has been in the in the vanguard of that, and I think we've been justified in the results.

Jennifer Griffin 18:10

Do you think there's been too much concern here in the United States at the leadership level about the potential for nuclear war and that that led to a hesitancy in the beginning two years of this conflict?

David Cameron 18:21

I think, you know, I understand that I mean, because, you know, the US is the is the linchpin of NATO and the owner as it were of the deterrent in many ways that you have to think about these things very carefully. But as I say, I think when you just think about it logically, what are we doing here? We're helping an independent sovereign state to defend itself. It has that right. It has the right to use our weapons and be trained on those weapons in order to defend itself. That doesn't limit you to no tanks. Or no long range artillery or no long range missiles. It means all of those things sometimes with proper safeguards are shouldn't be available. So I think sometimes there's been a bit of hesitancy over escalatory threats, which which actually, experience hasn't borne out

Jennifer Griffin 19:10

But do you think the nuclear threat is off the table now?

David Cameron 19:14

No one with Putin, you can never say anything is completely off the table because, you know, he wasn't the way he behaves. But it's it's clear that what we're doing is completely acceptable as supporting a sovereign independent nation.

Jennifer Griffin 19:30

Let's go back to the money issue, because that is what's resonating on Capitol Hill and among some Americans, there's some misunderstandings about how much the US is spending versus Europe. There's some old narratives I think that Europe is not pulling its weight that they NATO is not spending 2% of their GDP on their, on their defense budgets.

David Cameron 19:51

Well, let's do the 2%. First, I think that's important because I wasn't Donald Trump's biggest fan. But on this issue, he was right to say that more European nations needed to spend 2% Indeed, at the Cardiff NATO Conference, which I chaired in 2014. We said it was time for everybody to meet 2% That time, I think there were only four nations of which the UK was one. We're meeting 2% NATO has got over 30 Members, I think we're now over 20 meeting 2% And real progress

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on the others. And I think we're getting to a stage now where the ones not on 2% are really beginning to feel the pressure. And that's that's that's right. It's not right that America has to overpay for Europe's defense. We must pay our share. But when you come to the figures of what's happening now in Ukraine, I think I'm right in saying if you add military, civilian, economic, and humanitarian, I think that the overall European figure at 160 billion is almost twice as much as the US figure. So I think we really are putting our weight and the impact of this vote in Congress will be huge, because it will enable those of us that really want to get behind Ukraine for the next year, be able to go to all the other European countries and say right, you've seen what the US have done. Now we will need to join in

Jennifer Griffin 21:09

And the UK is the second largest donor of military assistance in Ukraine after the US and Lloyd Austin yesterday told the defense contact group that have \$44 billion that the US has spent in military aid. The Allies have spent a total of 36 billion that often also isn't out there. Let's also talk about the investment in the defense industrial base. So here are these figures that the US has spent \$100 billion in Ukraine, and it sounds like a lot of money for your average American. But a new Washington Post report put together by Mark Tyson and his colleagues at AI suggested that actually 90% of that money is staying here in the United States. It's helping build the defense industrial base of the 68,000,000,090% is going to building up munitions supply chains in 31 states. They looked at 117 production lines. Why is this a good investment?

David Cameron 22:11

Well I think it's not only that, ultimately, lots of our constituents. And members of the public live in places whether in the UK or in the states where there's a big industrial base and there's there's jobs and there's investment that will go in as a result. I think also Ukraine has been a tremendous wake up call to the west. It's totally reinvigorated NATO in the way that I said and that's a positive development because NATO is safeguarded our defense these last 60 years, but also I think it's a wake up call that you know, just in time might be okay for, you know, Amazon deliveries but just in time is not okay for defense. We do need to have bigger stocks. We do need to have more solid supplies. We do need to make sure that our supply chains are secure. And I think all of that work that's taking place is very important. And I think we're at a point where we've got to stop thinking about how we're running down or existing stocks to supply Ukraine, we need to think much more about how we build up our stocks. And I think in the more dangerous and insecure world that I was talking about supply chains, stocks, defense commitments, these things have become more important, and they're also more important for allies. I mean, I've just wedged in the point here that orcas which is a great development, orcas won't work as well. If we the Brits, or the Australians can't sell weapons systems to other allies that need to defend themselves because of the restrictions from ITAR and other things we got to find ways as friends and allies and partners to make sure we can help fellow democracies to defend themselves.

Jennifer Griffin 23:48

Why haven't sanctions against Russia and Putin worked?

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David Cameron 23:51

Well, I think they've worked it to an extent in that, you know, the calculation I've seen is that had the sanctions not been there, there would be another \$400 billion that will be available to Russia's war machine. I think to start with, we needed to make sure the sanctions were smarter and the oil restrictions now I think are much better at making sure that the high oil prices don't feed into Russian revenue, but keeping up the pressure, I mean, we just actually did some additional sanctions yesterday on 46 entities in 11 Different countries including Uzbekistan, Turkey, fellow NATO, China, all countries who've got businesses that are selling dual-use goods to Russia, so we're using our sanctions regime to stop that. Today we sanctioned two Russians linked to the FSB who've been trying to disrupt our democracy. So I think this is about having a kind of full spectrum right across the system approach to dealing with Russian bad actions.

Jennifer Griffin 24:55

Do you think the \$411 billion of Russian money overseas that's been frozen should be used to rebuild Ukraine?

David Cameron 25:02

Yes, I think this is a really interesting argument. And I'm going to be talking about this with Secretary Blinken. Later today. All of our countries quite rightly, have confiscated Russian assets and frozen them. And I think there's a very strong argument for saying let's instead of just freezing that money, let's take that money, spend it on rebuilding Ukraine. And that is, if you'd like a downpayment on the reparations that Russia will one day have to pay for the illegal invasion. That they've undertaken. Now, there are lots of arguments that will be produced against this arguments about what this chill investment in our economy is or isn't this somehow breaching legal undertakings of the past or the rest of it? I've looked at all the arguments and so far, I haven't seen anything that convinces me. This is a bad idea. And I think it does fall under the bracket of what I said in my remarks that you know, the world has changed. The world changed with Putin's invasion. It's changed with the way Iran is behaving. In the Middle East. It's changed with the level of insecurity we feel in our world has changed with the fact that China has become so much more hostile. And there's a tendency in our wonderfully vibrant democracies, as I said, of wanting, you know, being the party for a better yesterday, we want it to snap back. But I would say it's we've got two crises in the world at the moment Ukraine and the Middle East. I think it's probably more likely we get a third that we lose one of the two we got already.

Jennifer Griffin 26:25

Let's talk about China. Today's Pearl Harbor Day, what would a Chinese Pearl Harbor look like in your view?

David Cameron 26:32

Well first of all, we should remember the lesson from from Pearl Harbor about you know what an appalling act of aggression. That was and the importance of strength and deterrence through

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strength, which is, I think, at the heart of the lessons we learned in the 1930s and the 1940s. And that's why I feel so strongly about all this stuff. You know, you don't have to be a brilliant student of history to know that appeasing Hitler in the 1930s was a disaster. And we ended up with more invasions and more Hitler until eventually, we had to do something about it. And eventually the United States had to come in and and help us and the blood price gets higher the longer you wait to intervene. I think with China what I would say is, in my time as prime minister, yes, we tried to build a positive relationship. We tried to engage over issues like trade and some of those resulted in good economic outcomes for our country. But China has changed since I left office we've seen the treatment of the Uyghurs we've seen the treatment of Hong Kong, we've seen the wolf warrior diplomacy, we've seen the kind of, you know, terrible situations that were created when when Australia said something or Lithuania did something and you know, it's it's a different China, we're dealing with and we need to harden our systems and be very clear eyed as a result. And I think one of the strands of our approach is not only to try and protect ourselves and our systems against for instance, cybercrime, but also to align better with our allies including the United States, because it's much easier to stand up to this sort of things. If we stick together.

Jennifer Griffin 28:17

Do you believe that China's real goal is to take Taiwan without firing a shot like they did with Hong Kong?

David Cameron 28:24

The China goal that has always been there and of course, United States has a One China policy just as we have a One China policy is they believe in unification of China and Taiwan. The policy approach that we both share though is this cannot happen in a way that involves force or violence or coercion. And I think that's the right that's the right approach. And I think you know, if you link back to the Ukraine situation, this is important because China is watching what is happening in Europe. Iran is watching what's happening in Europe, and we know from even quite recent history, that if you pull back from one of these vitally important exercises in in working together and showing resolve, it resonates around the world.

Jennifer Griffin 29:18

We don't have much time left but I have to turn to the Middle East. That was your second trip. Do you still believe that a two state solution is possible between the Israelis and Palestine?

David Cameron 29:28

I do I mean, I think you know, when you go to Israel today and talk to people about it, it feels a long way off because you know, this is a nation and trauma. Israel on the eighth of October is a different country to what it was on the sixth of October. You know, the people in those butchers where I went in the south of Israel, they were the most peace loving, to states supporting, you know, group of people, many of them one of the families I met the one of people got taken hostage. That day was was driving gaza and families to Israeli hospitals to get them treatment. And so it is a nation in shock. So it feels a long way off. But ultimately, if you're a friend of Israel,

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and I am long term security for Israel means not only being strong not only having strong defenses, it means finding a way where your Palestinian neighbors are also living in peace and security and dignity. And ultimately, that must be in a two state solution. Getting there from where we are now is incredibly hard. But we have to plan we have to start thinking what happens on day one after this Israeli operation has finished. What do you do to build up and reform and revitalize the Palestinian Authority? How do you get Arab states to commit to working on that and thinking about how to provide stability and governance and security in Gaza? How do we improve the situation in the West Bank? It's it's, you know, it is incredibly difficult, but it must, to me, the alternatives to a two state solution are much worse.

Jennifer Griffin 31:02

Last question. Does Prime Minister Netanyahu still believe in a two state solution?

David Cameron 31:09

Well, you'd have to ask him that question. I haven't forgotten all the political answers that you have to give. But I will. I think the answer there is, is in Israel's long term security interests. And so friends of Israel have to persuade them of that fact. And then I think, judge them by whether the actions they take, make it in the long term more likely, or less likely.

Jennifer Griffin 31:41

Thank you. Very much.

David Cameron 31:43

Thank you. Thanks very much.

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